

International Women's Day

March 8

The first protest march against the terrible conditions under which women worked in the textile and garment industries of the United States was held on March 8, 1857, in New York City. American women have decided that the anniversary of this march is a good time to honor women's achievements and remember women's goals.

Women in the United States no longer fight for the right to vote. They have pretty much proved that they can be elected to and hold public office, although some campaigns waged against them often have sexist overtones. They are still fighting the language bias, insisting on chairperson instead of chairman and humankind instead of mankind, and rejecting the automatic use of masculine pronouns. Even though this battle has been called silly and superficial, it seems to be responsible for a great deal of consciousness-raising.

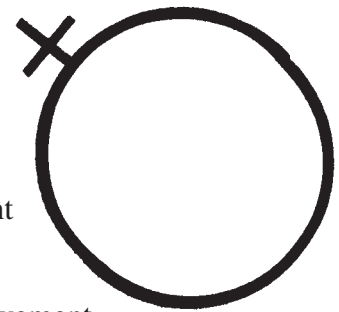
However, women must still engage in other battles. In the present day, there is supposed to be legal protection for the right of women to receive equal pay for equal work, but these laws are not always enforced. Women must still fight this battle. Discrimination against women in the hiring and promotion process is against the law also, but there still exists the "glass ceiling" in upper-level jobs and plain old prejudice in lower-level ones. Women are fighting the battle of sexual harassment, too, at work, in school, and in public places. These and other battles wage on.

Because it has been enthusiastically adopted by women in socialist countries, some people have tried to discredit the celebration of International Women's Day. It is still, however, a meaningful holiday in the United States and Canada. It can be a time for women of those countries to give thought to helping the causes of women in other lands, women who are still disenfranchised or not considered equal to men in other ways.

Making It Work

Have students do some research on the Women's Movement and find out:

- names of women who have been important or influential in the movement
- names of organizations that are associated with the movement
- titles and authors of books that have been important influences in the movement



Have interested students create posters and/or slogans that would be appropriate for use on International Women's Day.